Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims

1. – 2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) A hybrid fusion polypeptide~~,~~ comprising a multivalent immunogenic portion fused to an immunogenic polypeptide that is carboxy-terminal to the multivalent immunogenic portion, which protects the immunogenicity of the multivalent immunogenic portion, wherein the multivalent immunogenic portion comprises six immunogenic amino-terminal polypeptides of Group A streptococcal M protein from six different Group A streptococcal serotypes, wherein the immunogenic polypeptide that is carboxy-terminal to the multivalent immunogenic portion is a reiteration of the immunogenic amino-terminal polypeptide from the amino terminus of the multivalent immunogenic portion, wherein each of the six immunogenic amino-terminal polypeptides is at least 10 amino acids in length; and wherein at least one of the six immunogenic amino-terminal polypeptides of the ~~fusion polypeptide~~multivalent immunogenic portion is selected from ~~a~~ Group A streptococcal serotype 2, serotype 11, serotype 22, ~~or~~ and serotype 28.

4. – 7. (Cancelled)

8. (Currently Amended) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 3 wherein the at least one of the six immunogenic amino-terminal polypeptides of the ~~fusion polypeptide~~multivalent immunogenic portion is from ~~a~~ Group A streptococcal serotype 2.

9. (Currently Amended) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 3 wherein the at least one of the six immunogenic amino-terminal polypeptides of the ~~fusion polypeptide~~ multivalent immunogenic portion is from a Group A streptococcal serotype 11.

10. – 11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently Amended) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 3 wherein the at least one of the six immunogenic amino-terminal polypeptides of the ~~fusion polypeptide~~multivalent immunogenic portion is from a Group A streptococcal serotype 22.

13. (Currently Amended) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 3 wherein the at least one of the six immunogenic amino-terminal polypeptides of the ~~fusion polypeptide~~multivalent immunogenic portion is from a Group A streptococcal serotype 28.

14. (Currently Amended) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 3 wherein the hybrid fusion polypeptide elicits an immune response against a Group A streptococcal serotype from which one of the six immunogenic amino-terminal polypeptides is obtained, wherein the immune response comprises ~~comprising~~ opsonic antibodies against the Group A streptococcal serotype, which antibodies ~~M protein that~~ do not cross-react with human tissue.

15. (Withdrawn) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 3 further comprising a selectable marker encoded by an expression vector.

16. (Withdrawn) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 15 wherein the expression vector is a 6x His-tag.

17. (Withdrawn) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 15 wherein the encoded marker binds to nickel nitrilotriacetic acid (Ni-NTA) resin.

18. (Previously Presented) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 3 wherein the immunogenic polypeptides of the fusion polypeptide are joined by amino acids specified by a restriction enzyme site.

19. (Previously Presented) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 3 further formulated with an adjuvant.

20. (Original) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 19 wherein the adjuvant is alum.

21. (Original) The hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 19 further formulated with an immunomodulatory cofactor.

22. (Previously Presented) A composition comprising the hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 3, and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, carrier, stabilizer or diluent.

23. (Previously Presented) The composition according to claim 22 further comprising an adjuvant.

24. (Original) The composition according to claim 23 wherein the adjuvant is alum.

25. (Previously Presented) The composition according to claim 22 wherein the composition comprises at least one of a buffer, antioxidant, carbohydrate, and chelating agent.

26. (Previously Presented) The composition according to claim 22 further comprising an immunomodulatory cofactor.

27. (Previously Presented) The composition according to claim 26 wherein the immunomodulatory cofactor is selected from the group consisting of IL-4, IL-10, γ-IFN, IL-2, IL-12, and IL-15.

28. (Cancelled)

29. (Previously Presented) A composition consisting of (a) the hybrid fusion polypeptide according to claim 3 and (b)(i) a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, carrier, stabilizer or diluent; (ii) a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, carrier, stabilizer or diluent and an adjuvant; or (iii) a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, carrier, stabilizer or diluent and an immunomodulatory cofactor.